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A CALM and PLAIN

ANSWER

TO THE

ENQUIRY,

Why are you a DISSENTER from the
CHURCH of ENGLAND?

CONTAINING

SOME REMARKS

ON

DOCTRINE, SPIRIT, CONSTITUTION, and
some of its OFFICES and FORMS of DEVOTION.

By the Author of the *Dissenting Gentleman's*
LETTERS to WHITE.

giving a summary View of the Arguments contained in
those Letters.

Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall
be rooted up. MATT. XV. 13.

L O N D O N :

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TO
S A C R E D T R U T H ;

TO
L I B E R T Y ;

TO
The INTEREST and CAUSE of J E S U S
C H R I S T, the only King, in his
Kingdom the C H U R C H ;

TO
The CONSCIENCE and CONSIDERATION of
every Man, who expects to be judged,
and who hopes to be saved,
By J E S U S C H R I S T ;

This L I T T L E T R A C T is humbly Dedicated,

B Y
A L O V E R of T R U T H and P E A C E .

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A CALM and PLAIN

A N S W E R, &c.

To Mr. ———.

S I R,

IN many of our late conversations on the sufficiency of scripture as a rule of faith, on the rights of conscience, and the authority of fallible men to prescribe articles, as a test of orthodoxy in the Christian Church, I remarked with pleasure, that you expressed an earnest desire to be acquainted with the principles on which we founded our dissent from the Church of *England*.

You observed, that you had often heard us represented as a prejudiced, bigotted, and obstinate set of people, who separated from the mode of religion established in our country, not so much from any regard to conscience as from vanity and perverseness, and that such was the character lately given of us in a sermon preached before a great personage.

You candidly owned, indeed, that you sometimes suspected there were reasons for our dissent which you never thoroughly understood; because you knew many men of solid learning, and exemp-

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lary piety, who voluntarily embraced poverty and distress rather than accept the fair dignities and emoluments possessed by the church, and held out to their acceptance. Besides this, you are too well acquainted with the *English* history to forget that there were near two thousand of the clergy (men of unsullied characters) in the reign of Charles II. who quitted their livings in the church when it took its present form, and threw themselves and their numerous families on the providence of God and the wide world for their support, rather than conform to that establishment which now takes place.

I own I do not wonder that these facts, with which history and your own observation have furnished you, should cause you to suspect that there are some powerful reasons for our dissent; and I the more readily comply with your request of fairly representing them to you, as I promise myself that you have faith and fortitude sufficient to follow Truth wherever it may lead you, even though your attachment to its sacred cause should subject you to some worldly inconveniencies.

Were you, my friend, as much devoted to the world and all its vain concerns as some men I have known, I should despair of your calm attention to any subject like this, which has neither profit nor pleasure in the worldly sense to propose: but you, I flatter myself, have such ingenuity and rectitude of mind, that you will religiously attach yourself to the cause of Truth wherever you discover it, and that you will judge now upon this case, as one who expects himself to be hereafter judged for the talents which he possesses.

The ability of perceiving and professing the truth, is a most important talent or trust, for which

which we are to be accountable to the great fountain of truth by whom it was given. One principal end of our Lord's coming into the world was to bear witness to the truth, and one principal glory and characteristic of his disciples is, that they love the truth, that they seek and prefer it to all worldly considerations. The improvement, therefore, which we have made, and the reverence which we have paid, to this part of the Divine Image in which we are formed, cannot surely pass unnoticed at that awful tribunal, where nothing but integrity and truth can appear with honor.

Believing you, Sir, to feel the full force of these important considerations, I shall endeavour to inform you, with the sincerity of a Christian, and the freedom of a Briton, why I am a Dissenter from the Church of *England*. The first general principle on which I found my dissent (a principle which I shall frequently refer to, and particularly apply) is this, that no civil magistrate has, ever had, or ever can have any right, authority, or power over the consciences and religion of men; that his claiming to himself the interpretation of the Scriptures which contain the Christian religion, is assuming a power with which no civil magistrate ever can be invested, without directly opposing the very genius and spirit of that divine religion which it pretends to establish: for the Christian religion is an address to the reason and understandings of mankind; establishments are an address to their prejudices and passions. In the one, the love and the pursuit of truth is strongly inculcated; in the other, it is weakened if not destroyed by the temptations of interest and worldly preferment. The language of the Christian religion is, *Prove all things, hold fast that*

which is good; but that of the civil magistrate is, I have proved and examined for you, and unless you hold fast what I have determined to be right, you shall be deprived of many temporal advantages *here*, and without doubt perish everlastingly *hereafter*.

There never was, there never can be, my friend, any faithful alliance between the genuine spirit of Christianity and the maxims of worldly-minded statesmen. The rulers of mankind are satisfied with mere lip service: they aim not at the heart, and, indeed, the allurements which they propose are calculated to pervert the understanding rather than to inform it. Wherever fallible men presume to annex preferments to their arguments, it is a strong presumption of the weakness of their cause, and that despairing of real converts, they will content themselves with pretended ones.

There is no man who entertains a just idea of the dignity of human nature, but must treat with an honest and laudable contempt every restraint which any civil magistrate presumes to lay on his reasoning powers; and it is to this honest pride of man I attribute it, that though many are tempted to subscribe their unfeigned assent and consent to this unchristian usurpation, yet they so frequently appear solicitous of making some atonement for the treason which they have been guilty of against the sacred rights of conscience; and will, either in conversation, in their sermons, or their publications, resume those privileges which they had before renounced, and will think for themselves, notwithstanding their solemn declarations of assenting and consenting to the determinations of the Church. So many are the instances of this contradiction between the subscriptions and the writings, sermons, and conversation of many of

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the clergy, that I cannot help observing how much the cause of the Dissenters is supported, and virtually espoused even by the clergy of the establishment: for every one who either prints, preaches, or speaks on religious subjects, in the least inconsistently with the articles which he has subscribed is in fact a Dissenter, and renounces the authority of the Church in matters of faith, only with this melancholy aggravation, that the professed, the non-subscribing Dissenter has every advantage respecting consistency and sincerity. This mortification, so painful to every generous mind, I most heartily wish to be for ever removed. But besides this undue, this pernicious influence on the minds of men, from the assumed authority of the civil magistrate, I have many reasons, in my opinion, of great weight, which justify my dissent from the Church of *England*: for I think it is very evident that she is a *Dissenter* from the *Church of Christ*. I shall particularly instance in her *doctrine*, in her *spirit*, in her *constitution* or *frame*, and in some of her *offices* and *forms* of public worship.

As to her *doctrines*, I shall first mention two that relate to the power and authority assumed by her in matters of religion, which I think totally inconsistent with the allegiance we owe to Christ, and with the nature of religion itself; doctrines that appear to me of most important and most dangerous consequence, and which one cannot but be astonished that in an age of so much light, and of so much scepticism and infidelity, they are suffered to continue. I mention these first, because they are the foundation of all her other impositions and corruptions, and if they are well grounded, we have nothing to do,

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but submit to all her appointments and requirements in awful silence.

The first is Article XX. "*That the Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith.*"

The second is, "That every priest in this Church, from the highest archbishop to the meanest curate in the land, hath power and authority from Almighty God, even in the name of the Holy Trinity, to forgive or to retain the sins of men. See the Office of Ordination, and of Visitation of the Sick.

These two positions, to which every clergyman gives his unfeigned assent and consent, contain doctrines of the most alarming and most dangerous nature: they are the very *basis* and *foundation* of the whole system of POPERY, the two grand pillars on which the enormous fabric of the Papal Hierarchy rests. Admit but the truth of *these*, and the Church of *England* immediately becomes *felo de se*: it is condemned of itself, and at one blow overthrown: the glorious Reformation must have been unjustifiable, unrighteous, and schismatical, and all the ceremonies and rites which the Church of *Rome* had decreed, all the controversies of faith which she had authoritatively determined, all the articles concerning purgatory, image-worship, auricular confession, transubstantiation, canonization of saints, &c. which in a sacred synod at Trent she had solemnly pronounced to be believed and received, all these were to be reverently accepted and religiously observed; and Luther and Cranmer, Ridley and Calvin, by presuming to oppose their private opinions to the decisions of the Church, were guilty of *rebellion* against ecclesiastical authority,
and

and all their followers, the Protestants, stand condemned of the same crime, and are partakers in the guilt.

I forbear, Sir, to expatiate upon all the dangerous and absurd consequences a crafty Jesuit would draw from the two doctrines above mentioned, which the Church obliges all its clergy to profess and openly avow.

How absurd is the complaint that Popery prevails ! when we thus lay ourselves open, and furnish the very weapons with which it makes its most successful attacks.

If things continue as they are, no wonder if it should still more prevail, till with its sister, *Infidelity*, it has fatally sapped the foundations of the Church of *England*.

Betwixt these two stones how soon may it be ground to powder !

Having thus seen the power and authority claimed by the Church in matters of faith and salvation, let me represent to you the manner in which she has exercised these exorbitant claims.

The Church of *England* teaches, and obliges all her bishops and clergy to teach, and solemnly to subscribe, as in the presence of Almighty God, "*That whoever WILL BE SAVED, before all things it is NECESSARY that he hold the faith contained in what is commonly called the Athanasian Creed; WHICH FAITH except EVERY ONE doth keep whole and undefiled, he shall WITHOUT DOUBT PERISH EVERLASTINGLY.*" And having presumed minutely to explain the inexplicable mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity, and darkened the plain truths of *Christianity*, by a variety of unmeaning and unintelligible definitions, she adds, "*So that IN ALL THINGS as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.*"

He therefore that WILL BE SAVED must THUS think of the Trinity. This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully (i. e. heartily and sincerely) HE CANNOT BE SAVED."

Are these the terms of *salvation* and *damnation* published by Jesus Christ? If not, must it not be an *high crime* against the Majesty of Heaven, for fallible and weak men to publish in his Church *other terms* of *salvation* and *damnation* than his gospel hath established? Have such nothing to apprehend from that awful sentence of St. Paul, (Galat. i. 8.) "But if we or an angel from Heaven preach any other gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." You will be pleased, Sir, to observe that the objections of the Dissenters as such, to this part of the Church's doctrine, did not arise from their disbelief of the doctrine of the Trinity; for at the time of the separation, this controversy was wholly unattended to, and the majority of the Dissenters even now do, I presume, firmly believe the doctrine of the Trinity: but to make the belief of any human explications of it, especially those of that proud and ignorant man (whoever he was *) who fabricated this Creed, absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation, and to pronounce *all* who do not receive it, most certainly and eternally damned, this to us appears an act of such profane rashness and presumption as every good Christian should from his soul abhor.

Again in Article XIII. The Church teaches and obliges all her clergy to believe and to teach, "*That*

* Athanasius, 'tis well known, was not the maker of this Creed, which never appeared in the world till more than 200 years after his death.

works done before the grace of CHRIST and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasing to GOD, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace: Yea rather we doubt not but that they have the NATURE OF SIN."

What! were none of the worthy actions of a Socrates, a Plato, a Cato, of the noble youth in the gospel who had made it his great care to keep God's commandments, whom Jesus beholding loved him; nor the alms and prayers of Cornelius, which went up as a memorial for him before God, were none of these at all pleasing to God; but had all without doubt the Nature of Sin*!

Our blessed Saviour seems to have thought otherwise, when sending forth his disciples with the offers of his gospel of grace, he bids them, when they entered into a city or house, to enquire, who in it were worthy; i. e. meet to receive grace, and, if the people in it were *worthy*, to take their measures accordingly, Matt. x. 11.

In its office for private baptism, and article IX, the Church teaches and obliges all its clergy to believe and to teach, that every new-born infant that cometh into the world is born in the wrath

* There are few perhaps, (but some I have known) who have supposed the assertion of the apostle, Rom. xiv. 23. *That whatsoever is not of faith is sin*, merely from the sound of the words, to be a proof of the doctrine of the article; whereas it appears from the former clause of the verse, viz. *He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith*, as well as from the preceding context, that faith in this passage does not mean the Christian faith in general, but merely a persuasion of the lawfulness of eating certain meats. This the apostle forbids their doing with a doubting mind, agreeable to that maxim of all writers on the subject of morals, *That no man ought to do what he doubts the lawfulness of doing*, or as the apostle expresses it, *whatsoever is not of faith (a clear persuasion of mind) is sin*.

of God, and deserveth God's wrath and damnation.

What an idea must this give of the ever-blessed God, the Father of mankind, and Father of mercies! Jesus Christ we know took little children into his arms and blessed them, and held them forth to his disciples as objects deserving their love and imitation. But behold! the Church of England holds them up (though they have done neither good nor evil) as objects deserving God's wrath and damnation!

What mind can help revolting at the very mentioning of such a doctrine?

The Church farther teaches, Sir, Article XVIII. *That they are to be held ACCURSED who presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature.*" So that according to the Church's doctrine it is an *accursed thing* to believe that a Socrates, a Plato, a virtuous Mohammedan, or a conscientious Chinese, will find mercy with God (who is not an hard master that expects to reap where he has not sown) and be finally saved.

Does not St. Peter seem to fall under this heavy curse, who says, (speaking to this very point) *of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him?* Acts x. 34, 35.

Again in Canon XXIX. The Church teaches and requires, "*That no PARENT shall be urged to be present, nor shall be admitted to answer as godfather (i. e. as sponsor for its religious education) at the baptism of his OWN CHILD.*" How astonishing a decree this! That the PARENT to whom God and Nature have committed the education of the child, in whose family it is to grow up, under whole

whose eye and immediate care its principles, manners, and character are to be formed, should not only not be admitted to be a *partner* at least in this great trust, but that such unaccountable care is taken, and so express a prohibition given, that he shall not be urged to be *even present* at the transaction of this important affair!

The Church of *England* also teaches, and commands its clergy, over every person brought to be buried, (the unbaptized, excommunicated, and self-murderers excepted) how profligate or vile soever their whole course of life hath been, with much solemnity to declare, "*That it hath pleased Almighty God, of his great mercy, to take to himself the soul of this their dear brother; they therefore commit his body to the ground, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to Eternal Life; they give God hearty thanks, that it hath pleased him to deliver this their brother (this wicked and prophane man) out of the miseries of this sinful world, and pray God that when themselves shall depart out of this life they may rest in Christ, as their hope is this their brother doth.*"

Is this, my friend, the doctrine of Christ? Hath he not expressly told us, *Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor drunkards, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God,* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Have not thousands of immortal souls probably been lulled into a dangerous security, under an heavy load of guilt, by seeing the remains of men much viler and more wicked than themselves, thus committed to the grave, with hope that they rest in Christ, and that they are passed into the consolations and joys of Heaven?

It is a well known fact that archbishop Sancroft was so dissatisfied with this burial office,
that

that he acknowledged to Dr. Tillotson, that for that reason he had never taken on him a cure of souls.

Besides, what amazing inconsistency and self-contradiction is seen in this matter! The *Arians* and *Socinians*, who in the morning from the desk, before God and the congregation, are solemnly pronounced IMPOSSIBLE *to be saved*, and are sent down WITHOUT DOUBT to *everlasting damnation*; in the evening at the grave, before God and the same people, are solemnly declared *to be taken by Almighty God, in great mercy to himself, and that THEREFORE they commit their bodies to the ground, in sure and certain hope, &c.*

The doctrine of predestination also, as exhibited in Article XVII, manifestly tends, we think, to encourage negligence, security, and vain confidence in some, and to create a gloomy despondency and horror in others, "*who having*" (as the article expresses it) *continually before* "*their eyes the sentence of God's predestination,*" "*suffer a most dangerous downfall, whereby the*" "*devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or*" "*into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less*" "*perilous than desperation.*"

How contrary this to the mind of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, who would have *all men to be saved*, and is not willing that any should perish, but hath given his Son a ransom for all, and hath sworn by himself, that he desires not the death of a sinner!

I think, Sir, you will acknowledge that there is considerable weight in the objections, which I have urged against the doctrines of the Church of England. But perhaps you may suggest, that whatever errors and absurdities they may contain, they bear hard only on the clergy, who alone are

obliged to subscribe and to declare their unfeigned assent and consent to these articles. The laity, it will be said, are at full liberty to give or to withhold their approbation, as their own judgment directs. The learned Doctors * of your Church, Sir, will tell you, that you have not this liberty; but that the church considers all its members as obliged to conform their religious sentiments and practice to the articles and rites its authority hath prescribed.

But waving that point, let me beseech you to consider with great attention, that the religion of *Jesus Christ* is a sacred trust committed to you by God, committed with a solemn charge that you keep it *pure and undefiled*.

If you see then a Church which assumes to itself the prerogative of Christ, dominion or authority over the faith of Christians, and which, in consequence of this enormous claim, gives many wrong, exceeding wrong and injurious representations of the perfections and government of the ever-blessed God, and preaches such terms of salvation and damnation to mankind as Christ never preached; a Church which dooms to undoubted everlasting perdition some of the most religious and virtuous amongst men, and at the same time gives hope of eternal happiness to some of the most impious, debauched, and profane; a Church which represents the FATHER OF MERCIES as angry even to wrath with the whole human race, new-born babes not excepted, and subjecting them to a sentence of tremendous damnation, for an act which was done thousands of years before they came into being:

* Stebbing, Rutherford, &c.

—If you see a Church which represents the righteous, compassionate Father of mankind, as electing *a few*, by an act of sovereign pleasure, from amongst the numberless millions which himself had created, and placed in this weak and degenerate state, and without any regard to their moral character or actions, predestinating this few to everlasting life and happiness, but eventually consigning or leaving all the rest without remedy, and without hope, to sink into everlasting damnation and death:—If you see a Church that is censorious, intolerant, schismatical, that rejects from its communion some of the worthiest and best of men, and at the same time admits some of the vilest and most corrupt, that denounces curses and excommunications upon whoever shall affirm to be superstitious or erroneous the rites it hath invented, and the doctrines it hath decreed *, or that shall say, that a virtuous, conscientious heathen will finally be saved:—In a word, a Church which assumes to itself a power to give the Holy Ghost, and to confer upon all its clergy in the name of the Holy Trinity, *authority to forgive or to retain the sins of men*, I appeal to your serious thoughts, if you see the most holy religion of your Saviour (who will also soon be your *judge*) thus corrupted, deformed, exposed to the contempt of scoffing unbelievers, made a dangerous stumbling block, and an occasion of offence to inquisitive minds, whether in this case, your duty to Almighty God, your allegiance to Jesus Christ, your concern for the honour and success of his gospel, your love to your fellow men, your regard to the account which you are soon to give of your fidelity to this trust, do not ALL loudly

* See Canon IV, V, VI.

call upon you to declare openly your *protest* against these corruptions of Christianity, and to profess yourself a *Dissenter* from that Church.

In vain do men worship, who teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Remember the solemn charge the Apostle hath given, 1 Tim. vi. 3. *If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to Godliness, i. e. which gives worthy and just notions of the ever blessed God, from such withdraw thyself.* And again (ver. 13, 14) *I give thee charge in the sight of God who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment (this religion of Christ) without spot unrebukable, until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ*.*

* I think that, from the nature and intention of public worship, it cannot be indifferent to me, in a moral and religious view, whether the doctrines and the spirit of the Church to which I give my public countenance, are conformable to the doctrines and spirit of Christianity or not. When I attend the public worship of God, I ought to consider myself, in all the devotional parts of the service, as engaged in a solemn address to the Supreme Being, under those characters, and as possessed of those perfections, which reason and revelation have, in *my own best judgment*, ascribed to him; and by my attending any particular Church in preference to others, it is virtually declaring, that the professed, the peculiar principles of that Church are such as I avow, such as I wish to support, as far as my personal attendance and example will do it.

OF



OF THE
SPIRIT of the CHURCH of ENGLAND,
AND THE
SPIRIT of JESUS CHRIST.

If any Man (if any Church) hath not the Spirit of CHRIST, it is none of his.
ROM. viii. 9.

THE spirit of Jesus Christ is catholic, tolerant, liberal, breathing universal love: its characteristics are mutual condescension, bearing with one another's different sentiments in religion, holding the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves. Receive one another, but not to doubtful disputations. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he stands or falls. If thy brother be grieved by thy meats (rites or ceremonies) now walkest thou not charitably: destroy not him with thy meats for whom Christ died: if meats (rites or ceremonies) make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make

make my brother to offend. Bless and curse not.

Is this, Sir, the spirit which the Church of England breathes? Let impartiality judge. The acts of uniformity, which are the parents that gave it life, and the pillars on which it stands, shall witness what manner of spirit it is of.

By 1st Eliz. it declares and enacts, "*That if any person or persons whatsoever shall, by open words, declare or speak any thing to the derogation, depraving, or despising the book of Common Prayer, &c. or of any thing therein contained, or any part thereof, he shall for the first offence forfeit an hundred marks, for the second four hundred marks, and for the third all his goods and chattels, and shall suffer imprisonment during life.*"

By another act (9 and 10 of W. III.) it decrees, "*That if any one educated in the Christian religion, and professing the same, shall by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking, deny the Christian religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures to be of Divine Authority, or any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God, or maintain that there are more Gods than one, he shall for the first offence be rendered incapable of holding any office or place of trust, and for the second, be rendered incapable of bringing any action, of being guardian, executor, legatee, or purchaser of lands, and to suffer three years imprisonment without bail.*"

You will also be pleased to remember, that by the act 13 and 14 of Charles II. the Church very cruelly cast out and deprived of their livings, and threw upon the wide world, with their numerous distressed families, a great number of her pious, learned, and laborious clergy, Manton,

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Bates,

Bates, Baxter, Owen, Calamy, Flavel, Howe, Pool, and near two thousand more.

On what account? Why for no other fault than refusing “*to subscribe the thirty-nine articles, and to declare solemnly before God their unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in, and prescribed by the book of Common Prayer, and the form and manner of ordaining and consecrating bishops, priests, and deacons.*”

The same illiberal and ungenerous spirit which thrust out in the last age those two thousand confessors, whose names will descend with honour to the latest posterity, hath continued to operate in the present age, so as to shut the doors of the Church against such excellent and worthy characters as Henry, Watts, Doddridge, Grove, Chandler, Foster, Leland, Abernethy, Pierce, Hallet, Duchal, Lowman, Lardner, Taylor, &c. &c. names of no mean rank in the republic of sacred literature, illustrious defenders of the Christian revelation, and of the rights of mankind, able ministers of the New Testament, who shine with distinguished lustre (no doubt) in the Church Triumphant above, though they could not be admitted to fill the meanest curacy, or to officiate in the lowest station, amongst the clergy of this uncatholic imperfect Church below. Nay, upon so illiberal a plan is this Church at present formed, that should any of the most celebrated foreign divines make a visit to this nation (or were it even possible for the Apostle *Paul* himself to do it) not one of them could be asked or suffered to preach in any chapel or church (unless he had first before some bishop read the Thirty-nine Articles, and declared his unfeigned assent to the same) under penalty of three months imprisonment in the common jail, without bail or mainprize. Is this, Sir,

Sir, the spirit of genuine Christianity, of the Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints? Seriously consider it, then tell me how you would define the spirit of Antichrist.

As a farther illustration of the meekness and gentleness of the spirit of this Church, its Canon (IV) solemnly denounces, "That whoever shall affirm that the form of God's worship, contained in the Common Prayer, hath any thing in it that is repugnant to the Scriptures, let him be excommunicated, ipso facto; and not be restored but by the bishop of the place, after his repentance, and public recantation of such his wicked errors."

Canon V. denounces the same heavy curse upon whoever shall affirm, "That any of its thirty-nine Articles are in any part superstitious or erroneous, or such as he may not with a good conscience subscribe unto."

Canon VII. denounces the same excommunication, ipso facto, upon whoever shall affirm, "That the government of the Church of *England*, under his or her Majesty, by Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons, &c. &c. is repugnant to the word of God."

How tremendous a thing this excommunication ipso facto is, let the learned canonists of the Church inform us.

"It denounces a man accursed, devoted to the devil, separated from Christ and his Church's communion*." By archbishop Wake we are told, "First, in this case there is no need of any admonition, as where the Judge is to give sentence, but every one is to take notice of the law at his peril, and to see that he is not over-

* Godolphin's Rep. Canon. pag. 625, 626.

“ taken by it; and secondly, that there is no
 “ need of any sentence to be pronounced which
 “ the Canon itself hath passed, and which is by
 “ that means already promulged upon every one
 “ as soon as he comes under the obligation of
 “ it*. Lyndwood also says, “ By the excom-
 “ munication, ipso facto, the person stands excom-
 “ municated, nullo hominis ministerio interve-
 “ niente, i. e. by the fact itself, without any
 “ process, judgment, or sentence of any court.”

The unhappy person who is excommunicated (which may be and often is done for not paying a trifling sum) is not only shut out of the Church, debarred Christian communion, not to be interred, when he dies, in holy ground, but is disabled from enjoying many civil immunities; and if he does not submit himself, and recant within forty days, may be committed to prison by a writ, *De excommunicato capiendo*, where he must lie till he perishes, if he do not retract; for the Archbishop himself cannot absolve him, till after his repentance, and revoking his wicked errors.

I beg leave to finish my observations on these unchristian principles, by mentioning the LXXIII Canon, which denounces “ excommunication;
 “ ipso facto, upon all ministers, or any other
 “ persons, who shall meet together in any private
 “ house, to consult upon any matter or course to
 “ be taken by them, or upon their motion by
 “ any other, which may tend to the impeaching
 “ or depriving of the doctrine of the Church of
 “ England; or of the book of Common Prayer,
 “ or of any part of the government or discipline
 “ now established therein.”—So that if those
 learned and pious clergymen, the authors of the

* Wake's Appeal, page 22.

Free and Candid Disquisitions, should have met together in any private house, to compare their judicious and candid remarks, and to prepare them for the public inspection, they all stand by this Canon excommunicated ipso facto, and their ministerial functions in the Church are thence forward rendered null and absolutely void.

It is to me, Sir, I assure you, no agreeable task to point out these blemishes in a Church which bears so high a rank amongst those called the *Reformed*; but as the cause of Christianity is, I am verily persuaded, exceedingly hurt by them, and as a general reformation of those which are still enslaved by the tyranny of *Rome*, is, we hope in God, not far off, how greatly is it to be wished that the Church of *England* should be rendered as free as possible from every defect, and be established upon as pure and as catholic a plan as human wisdom and piety are able to effect, that it may be set up as a kind of *standard to the nations* around, a pattern to copy after in the change they will hereafter make in their ecclesiastical affairs!

But, in abatement of the severity of these Canons and Laws, perhaps you will observe, that they are all, as to us of the present age, mere lifeless forms, an unmeaning and dead letter, since we feel nothing of their rigour, but write and speak as freely upon these subjects, without any molestation from them, as if no such laws had ever been made.

I answer, this favour we owe not to the SPIRIT of the Church, as an ecclesiastical constitution, but (through the mercy of God) to the SPIRIT of the Times, to the equity, the moderation, and

good policy of the State *. These unrighteous Laws and Canons of the Church are still in full force, though by the wisdom of government their malignant power is restrained. They are still held as a tremendous rod over all the oppugners of the Church rites, who every moment *lie at mercy*. Though the act of toleration hath freed us from the oppression of those penal laws which relate to mere nonconformity to the established mode of worship, yet it has left others, very severe ones, in full power to distress us, should the administration of these kingdoms ever fall into tyrannical hands, which God forbid † !

Though we are sincerely thankful to the favour of Heaven, and the justice of our governors, for the blessings enjoyed since passing the act of toleration, yet it is far from being (as it has generally been called) an equitable one.

It by no means restores to us that liberty, and those rights, which both as men and as Christians we can justly claim : it prescribes such conditions of our exercising those rights as no civil government, we humbly apprehend, can equitably prescribe ; for even by this act an authority is still

* The act of toleration (says the learned author of the *Alliance betwixt the Church and State*) happened not to be the good work of *the Church*, begun in the conviction of truth, and carried on upon the principles of *charity*, but was rather owing to the vigilance of *the STATE*, wisely provident for the support of *civil liberty*. *Postscript in answer to Lord Bolingbroke.*

† The anathemas in our Canons (says an excellent person) are so inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, that it is quite necessary to part with them as soon as may be. They are the language of the Apocalyptic ——— most certainly, not of the disciples of the meek and lowly Saviour of men ; and yet is not the book which contains this language ordered to be read so many times a year (once at least, if not oftener) in all our churches ? *Candid Disquisitions*, p. 172, Note.

claimed over the faith of those who stand in no manner of ecclesiastical relation to the Church. Our dissenting ministers have renounced her dignities, receive none of her wages, and desire only to worship God according to their own consciences: notwithstanding this, every one who ministers in our Churches, without having first subscribed publicly thirty-five of these dark, unscriptural, disputable Articles, is liable by law to grievous and oppressive fines, and may be totally ruined by the *laws of men*, for not only innocently, but virtuously obeying what he thinks to be commanded by the *laws of God*. Surely in this liberal and enlightened age, and in Britain, the glory of all lands, for the freedom with which truth is allowed to display its charms, where the rights of humanity and the nature of religion are so well understood, this state of our case should awaken a generous indignation and promote an immediate relief; for the subscription enjoined by this act is a yoke to which many of the most virtuous and learned of our ministers dare not submit, and from which thousands of your own, we *presume*, groan for redemption, travelling in pain, longing to be delivered into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

The noble Protest which the honourable members of the present *House of Commons* have entered against these unrighteous and intolerant acts, by their almost unanimous vote for their repeal; and the truly Christian and patriotic spirit with which it was supported by many of the most illustrious Lay-Peers in the *House of Lords*; we consider as an happy omen that the day of religious truth and liberty begins to dawn, and is cherishing the celestial fruits of righteousness and peace, to plant

and promote which the son of GOD came down from Heaven, and preached his *Gospel* amongst Men.

But—extremely unhappy is the Fate of the Church! that those who are called its *pastors* and *Overseers*, should, instead of defending, betray its most sacred rights: and not entering themselves into the doors of *religious liberty* which their great MASTER, at the price of his blood, hath set open, should exert their united force cruelly to shut it up; and to hinder *those who would enter*. But, how hard is it to drink deep into the spirit of this world, and at the same time to imbibe, and to act vigorously under the influence of the *divine Spirit of JESUS CHRIST*! *His kingdom*, he hath told us, *is not of this world*: its splendors and pomps are apt to dazzle and pervert the brightest understandings, and to corrupt the soundest hearts: *The friendship of the world, is enmity to GOD*, to righteousness and truth!

But—in this we rejoice.—The cause must be reheard before an awful tribunal, in which JESUS, our once crucified LORD, will preside: when their Lordships, disrobed of all temporal distinctions, must stand upon a level with such men as *Doddridge*, and *Watts*, and *Leland*, and *Lardner*—whom their Lordships have lain under a *legal incapacity*, and have thereby virtually *forbidden* them to preach the *gospel* to mankind. Alas! how dear bought, at the price of the least infringement of *integrity*, are these temporary bawbles, mitres, and thrones, and ample revenues, if they at all forfeit, or even diminish, the title to that *crown of Glory* which the SUPREME PASTOR will then bestow? That *Crown*, we know, will then be given to all who, like HIMSELF, have gone out

to preach his gospel under great worldly discouragements; *choosing rather affliction*, with the testimony of a good conscience, *than to enjoy the pleasures and emoluments* of a sinful compliance; which will soon vanish as a dream; and will at least degrade, if not exclude, from that *everlasting Kingdom* of GOD, which is thenceforward to take place.—To that righteous *Judge* of mankind, and *supreme* HEAD of the Church, we cheerfully commit our cause; not doubting but he will plead it before the impartial world; and with humble resignation wait the event.



*Of the Constitution of the Church of
England, and of the Church of
CHRIST.*

THE Church of Jesus Christ is a holy, catholic Church, and a communion of saints, a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly ministred, Article XIX.

It is a holy Church, represented as an immaculate Spouse, to be presented to the great Bridegroom, without spot or blemish, or any such thing, Eph. v. 27. A temple of the living God, which if any man defiles, him will God destroy, 1 Cor. iii. 17. A holy city or community, into which nothing that is defiled, no openly profane and immoral person, is permitted to enter, Rev. xxi. 27. These are spots in your feasts, Jude 12. The Apostle says, cast out therefore from amongst you that wicked person, 1 Cor. v. 13.

Is the Church of *England* such an holy Church formed upon this divine model? Is she not in this respect, in the sight of the whole world, a Dissenter from the Church of Christ? Does she not, by her test law, receive into her bosom multitudes of the most debauched, profligate, and profane men, and in effect compel them to come in and
partake

partake of her most holy rites, and to eat and drink at the table of *that Lord* whose name they blaspheme, and whose religion they abhor? Is not this what our Saviour calls *taking the childrens bread, and casting it to dogs?*

Again, the Church of Christ is a catholic Church, and a communion or community of saints. It gathers together all the children of God, all righteous and good men, wherever dispersed abroad, whatever their particular sentiments or opinions may be, into one blessed society, one family, one body. They are all brethren, fellow members, in this one household or Church of God, and as such are all to eat as at one table (a communion or common table) in token of their relation to Christ their common head, and of their affection to one another: for we being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread, 1 Cor. x. 17.

But is the Church of *England* thus catholic, and a communion of saints? Observe her conduct. At the same time that she admits to her communion crowds of notorious *sinners* whom the King nominates to a post, she rejects all foreign Protestants upon the face of the whole earth, and all the most religious Dissenters in these kingdoms, who, besides acknowledging obedience to all the commands of Christ, will not obey also an arbitrary injunction of her own: that is, all who refuse to eat this sacramental supper in any other than a table posture, as Christ, and his apostles, and all the primitive Christians undoubtedly did, and not in an adoring posture, as the Pope and his cardinals, and all believers in transubstantiation, direct it to be done.

“ There

“ There must be somewhere a very great fault,” says archbishop Potter *, “ when any one of the
 “ meanest believers is excluded from commu-
 “ nion who desires to embrace it on terms which
 “ God has prescribed. As the Christian religion
 “ has been completely published to the world by
 “ our blessed Lord and his apostles, no addition
 “ can be made to it without a new revelation:
 “ here then is no room for innovation.”

In the Church of Christ, the Lord's Supper is instituted and used only for spiritual and religious ends: in the Church of *England* it is notoriously both instituted and used for political and worldly ends, as a qualification for a civil or military post. In the former it was appointed with intention and as a mean of uniting all Christians, and of destroying all variance and distinctions betwixt them: in the latter it is appointed with intention and as a mean of discriminating and dividing them; of separating some Christians from other Christians, and thus of strengthening and perpetuating divisions amongst them.

The rod with which the Church of Christ chastises its delinquents is spiritual, not carnal; but the rod of the Church of *England* is carnal, not spiritual. By the constitution of the former the excommunicated member is only to be deprived of spiritual privileges, such as fellowship in prayer, singing, sacraments; it meddles not with his civil rights: but by the constitution of the latter, the excommunicated person is delivered over to the civil arm to humble and chastise him, to strip him of many invaluable natural rights, and, if he does not repent in forty days, to cast him into

* Theol. Works.

prison, where he may lie and perish. As see page 20.

Farther, the Church of Jesus Christ is a kingdom not of *this world**; not formed upon the model, not supported by the powers, not shining with the pomps and splendors of this world: it was its glory that it made its way, and was established upon earth, not only without, but in direct opposition to them. *Ye are not of the world*, our Lord tells his disciples, *as I am not of the world*†: *I have chosen you out of the world*. The grand design of his religion is to call off men's attention from, and to mortify their affections to, the grandeurs and pomps and riches of this world; admonishing us *that THESE are not of the FATHER, but of the WORLD*, and will *soon pass away*: but he that doeth the will of God‡, the man of uncorrupted virtue, who holds fast the simplicity and purity of the gospel, the man who is never drawn by any emoluments of this world, nor ever tempted by its frowns, to violate his conscience, or to deviate from the path of TRUTH, and of RIGHT, this is the man who will rise into the preferments and dignities of the Messiah's kingdom, which is shortly to take place, and will there not only *abide*, but reign with him for ever.

But let any man attentively consider the Church of *England*, and will he not see it to be most indisputably a kingdom of this world; a civil polity or constitution formed after the model, suited to the taste, supported by the powers, shining with the pomps and splendors of this world, an entire creature of the State? See, its

* John xviii. 36.

† xvii. 16. xv. 19.

‡ 1 John ii. 16, 17.

bishops and pastors are princes of this world! have their palaces and thrones, which no duke, earl, or peer of the realm hath. They are seated, and rank amongst the nobles of *this* WORLD, *sitting in the temple* (the church) *of* GOD, shewing themselves as Gods (rulers) amongst men; have large provinces subjected to their *temporal* dominion (for such it really is, though falsely called spiritual); have their courts, their chancellors, their registers, and a long train of inferior officers, by which they exercise lordship and temporal authority and jurisdiction over men, contrary to the exprefs command and injunction of our blessed Lord, Mark x. 42, 43. *It SHALL NOT be so amongst you!*

Behold! the long and pompous train of *Archbishops, Diocesan Bishops, Chancellors, Deans, Archdeacons, Canons, Chanters, Rural Deans, Prebendaries, Registers, Sub Deans, Præcentors, Rectors, Vicars, Curates, &c.* Find you any of these offices in the grand Charter of the Christian Church, the Scriptures of the New Testament? Not the least sign of them there! Trace them back to their origin, they came not, you will see, from the *apostolic* fountain of *Jerusalem*, but from the corrupted source at *Rome*. Who were the first fathers and founders of this hierarchy? Were they not undoubtedly the Pope and his conclave? Are they not the creatures of Romish avarice and ambition, of Italian extraction, sent over to deluded Britain in times of deep ignorance, fixing themselves by falshood and fraud in some of the fairest and fattest of our provinces, grasping rich manors, worming themselves into posts of highest dignity and trust, and heaping so vast a load of riches and honours on that devouring *idol the Church*, till it sunk under the enormous weight,
and

and the Reformation, a partial Reformation took place?

But are there, Sir, no offspring of these Italian fathers, it may be asked, still existing in Britain, no successors to their dignities, their rich revenues, their powers, still visible amongst us? None who shine upon the thrones, fatten in the stalls, and bask in the rich livings of their Romish predecessors, committing ravages upon the Church by *Commendams*, *Dispensations*, *Pluralities*, *Non-residencies*, whilst multitudes of learned and laborious clergymen are starving upon poor curacies; or on scanty and mean livings, one performing the *office*, another taking the *benefice*; one doing the *work*, another sacrilegiously grasping the wages given for that work, to the disgrace of humanity, to the scandal of our constitution, to the deep reproach of Christianity, the sacred name of which is profaned by being prostituted to purposes so unrighteous and base?

What are your ideas, Sir, of that *vine of the earth*, Rev. xiv. 18, 19. whose clusters, when fully ripe, the angel is commanded to thrust in his sharp sickle, and to gather, and to cast them into the wine-press of the wrath of Almighty God? Who would not tremble at the awful judgment that follows, if he knows himself to have any lot or share in this matter? See ver. 20.

But to conclude this head. The Church of *England* is most apparently a Dissenter from the Church of Jesus Christ; a society absolutely distinct, as they have two different SUPREME HEADS or *fountains* of power, whence all authority, jurisdiction, and ministrations in the *two* Churches severally spring.

In the Church of *Christ*, Himself is the *supreme head*, the ONLY lawgiver and sovereign; *to us there*

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In the Church of *Christ*, Himself is the *supreme head*, the ONLY lawgiver and sovereign; to us
there

there is but one Lord *. *One is your master, even Christ* †. *Gave him to be head over all things to the Church* ‡. But the Church of England has another, a quite different *supreme head*, namely the King or the Queen of these realms, “vested with
 “ *all power, to exercise all manner of ecclesiastical*
 “ *jurisdiction; and archbishops, bishops, arch-*
 “ *deacons, &c. have no manner of jurisdic-*
 “ *tion ecclesiastical, but by and under the King*
 “ *or Queen’s Majesty, who hath full power and*
 “ *authority to hear and determine all manner of*
 “ *causes ecclesiastical, and to reform and correct*
 “ *all sin, errors, heresies, enormities whatsoever,*
 “ *which by any manner of spiritual authority*
 “ *ought, or may be lawfully reformed* ||.”

Accordingly, at the first formation and establishment of this Church under Henry VIII. and Edward VI. all the bishops took out commissions from *the crown*, for the exercising their spiritual jurisdiction in these kingdoms, during the King’s pleasure only; and acknowledge in their commissions all sort of jurisdiction, as well ecclesiastical as civil, to have flowed originally from the regal power, as from a supreme head, and a fountain and spring of all magistracy within his own kingdom§. Yea, even the power of ordination itself, which is reckoned a peculiar of the episcopal office, the first founders of this Church derived from the King, and exercised *only* as by authority from him, and during his pleasure. “Thus Cranmer,
 “ archbishop of Canterbury, Bonner, bishop of
 “ London, &c. took out commissions from the
 “ crown, importing, that because the vicegerent
 “ (Cromwell, a lay person) could not personally

* 1 Cor. viii. 6.

† Matt. xxiii. 8.

‡ Ephes. i. 22.

|| 37 Henry VIII. cap. 17. 1 Eliz. cap. 1.
 Hist. Reform. Part II. page 91.

§ Burnet’s

“ attend

“ attend the charge in all parts of the kingdom,
 “ the KING authorises the bishop, in his (the
 “ King’s, or rather the Vicegerent’s) stead, to or-
 “ dain within his diocese, such as he judged wor-
 “ thy of holy orders; to collate to benefices, and
 “ exercise all other parts of the episcopal autho-
 “ rity, and this during the King’s pleasure
 “ only *.”

In consequence of this *supremacy*, the King or Queen, in this Church hath power, to excommunicate from, or admit into it, independent of, yea in direct opposition to, all its *bishops* and *priests*. They have power to forbid all preaching for a time, as did Henry VIII. Edward VI. Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth; to limit, instruct, and prescribe to the clergy what they *shall*, and what they *shall not* preach, as did Queen Elizabeth, K. James I. K. Charles I. K. William. Finally, to the King or Queen also does it pertain to declare what is heresy; and authoritatively to pronounce what tenets and doctrines *are*, and what *are not* to be censured *as such*. Nor have all the bishops and clergy, assembled in convocation, the least authority to condemn any tenet as heretical, till the prince upon the throne has first considered

* See Examin. Codex Juris Angl. p. 31, 32. As all the power of ordination which the Bishops of the Church of England have, or can claim, as Bishops of that church, is entirely from the King; and only from his commission; we are not at all dissatisfied under the want of such orders: esteeming ordination by Presbyters, acting under Christ’s commission, at least as valid as that by Bishops, acting only as delegates from an earthly prince, and commissioned by him to a certain service in his kingdom, like other officers of state.—That Bishops and Presbyters were officers of the same order and power in the primitive apostolic church, see fully proved in Dr. Chauncey’s late excellent treatise—*Complete View of Episcopacy*—where all the passages in every writer of the two first centuries are distinctly quoted, and candidly examined.

and examined it, and found it to be such, and, in consequence of this, gives his consent.—Thus when the books of Mr. Whiston were by the whole convocation of bishops and clergy solemnly condemned, “ as containing *damnable* and *blasphemous* assertions against the doctrine and worship of the ever blessed Trinity; and all christian people are earnestly besought, by the mercies of Christ, to take heed how they give ear to these false doctrines, as they tender the honour and glory of our Saviour,” &c.—This solemn censure was of no force, no efficacy at all, in this primitive apostolic Church, because the Queen (Ann) did not think proper to confirm it. Observe and wonder! Her Majesty’s opinion upon those deep mysterious points, the Trinity, Incarnation, Generation of the Logos, &c. was different from that of her learned bishops and clergy: and in the balance of the Church, her judgment is of more weight, than that of its whole clergy in convocation convened.

But her renowned predecessor, the despotic Elizabeth, carried this supremacy to a much more exalted height: telling her bishops, that God had made her their overlooker, threatening to turn them out if they did not look well to their charge; sequestering, in great wrath, good archbishop Grindal from his archiepiscopal functions, for not obeying a rash and tyrannical order of the Queen’s, relating to religious matters, with which in conscience he could not comply: and continuing him many years under this sequestration, though both houses of convocation most humbly and earnestly besought his restoration.

When the university of Cambridge was greatly convulsed by a controversy about Predestination, Grace, and Perseverance, the two archbishops,

Whitgift and Hutton, with some other bishops, drew up nine articles to compose the controversy, to be sent to Cambridge.—But the Queen, jealous and tenacious of her ecclesiastical supremacy, was so offended with the prelates for not calling in her authority, that she threatened to attain them of a præmunire, and commanded Whitgift to call them in and suppress them. *Vid. Macaulay's Hist. of England, Vol. II. p. 60 **

Can any human imagination possibly conceive that *this* is the constitution of the Church of Christ? Has not the apostle Paul, in the strongest language, condemned it; expressly commanding, 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. and 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12. *Let the woman keep silence with all subjection; for it is not permitted, yea it is a shame to a woman, to speak or to teach in the Church, and to usurp authority over the man.* But behold here we see a woman teaching, directing, exercising spiritual, ecclesiastical authority, not only over a man, but over her convocation, and over all the bishops and clergy!

When we stripped the Pope of his supremacy, and vested it in the crown, had we taken along

* Queen Elizabeth made, indeed, not her Convocation only but her two Houses of Parliament to feel, and to tremble under the weight of her *supremacy*. For when at different times, they were preparing, or had passed several excellent bills, for regulating some disorders in ecclesiastical affairs, she sends them an angry message, smartly reprimanding them for encroaching on her supremacy, forbidding the Speaker to receive or to read *any bills* touching reformation of ecclesiastical affairs. A bill for the better observation of the sabbath, though recommended in an elegant speech by the Speaker, she refused, because it was a matter of religion, which she would not permit them to meddle with, as being her prerogative. This was undoubtedly a stretch of her prerogative. The competency of parliament to every ecclesiastical as well as civil question will hardly be denied by any.

with it his infallibility too, our constitution would have stood upon more defensible ground. But to lodge the absolute direction of the conscience, the faith and discipline of the Church with a *fallible head*; to give a prince, yea a lady, bred up in all the softnesses and diversions of a court, an uncontrollable dominion over the religious conduct of both her clergy and laity, authoritatively to direct what the one is to preach, and what the other is to believe; this is a constitution which quite shocks the understanding! Great, doubtless, hath been the scandal which sagacious infidels have taken at our holy religion, by seeing it thus dressed, like its divine author, in robes of *mock majesty*; and made a step to mount the thrones, and to grasp the riches of this earth.

Bishop Burnet says, that “ Parker bishop of Oxford exalted the king’s authority in matters of religion in so *indecent* a manner, that he condemned the ordinary form of saying *the King was under God and Christ*, as a crude and profane expression; saying, that though the King was indeed under God, yet not under *Christ*, but ABOVE him.” *Hist. of his own Times*, Vol. II. p. 12. 8vo. edit.—But, perhaps, on the foot our constitution now stands, there was nothing so indecent or offensive in his assertion as at first sight may appear. For if the *King* can make *other* articles of faith, *other* terms of communion, *other* rites of worship, than *Christ* hath ordained, and can authoritatively dictate to his ministers what they shall, and what they shall not preach, is he not, as the bishop says, evidently *not under*, but above him, and Christ is neither sole nor supreme King in his kingdom?

This

This *supremacy* in *religious* matters which the *civil magistrate* possesses, has been represented as the consequence of a COMPACT OR ALLIANCE formed betwixt *the Church and the State*. The *Church*, in consideration of the protection and emoluments given her by the *State*, has yielded up her *independency* and *supremacy* to the *magistrate*: and given him power to model her creed, to prescribe articles of faith, forms of worship, terms of communion; and sovereignly to direct, controul, and overrule her in all her spiritual and ecclesiastical concerns.

If this is really the case, it may with confidence be affirmed, That the Church stands chargeable before God and the whole world, with a base violation of a *previous compact* she had made with Christ her only rightful sovereign. She is guilty of an open breach of her marriage contract *, in which, renouncing all other lords, she gave herself most solemnly and entirely to him, who had bought her with a price, even his

* The relation betwixt Christ and the Church is frequently represented under the figure of a marriage-contract, or espousals. 2 Cor. xi. 2. *I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have ESPOUSED you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.* Rev. vii. 4. *Ye are dead to the law, that you should be MARRIED to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that you should bring forth fruit unto God.* See Eph. v. 25. Psal. xlv. 10. Isai. liv. 5, 6. Jer. iii. 14. Whenever then any Church renounces her allegiance and subjection to *Christ*, throws herself into the arms of the State (the civil magistrate) for protection and support, and gives him power to prescribe to her articles of faith, and forms of worship; she resembles the apocalyptic harlot, who is represented as committing fornication with the kings of the earth, Rev. xviii. 3. and all the dignities and emoluments with which the State hath adorned her, are considered as the rewards of prostitution, the price of her adulteries; of which she is to be stript, turned out with indignation, and exposed to public shame.

own most precious blood, vowing to honour and obey him only as her Lord and King, to the end of her life.

This fine-spun scheme of *an alliance betwixt Church and State*, is at once overthrown by this single consideration;

That an alliance is formed only betwixt *sovereign* and *independent* powers; but the Church is no *sovereign*, has no *supremacy* or *independency* which she can possibly give up. She is a *purchased servant*, a *subject*, a *married woman*, or *spouse*, and therefore can have no shadow of right to enter into any *compact*, or to form any *alliance* with the powers of this *world*, without the consent of her only rightful sovereign and husband JESUS CHRIST.—If therefore distrusting his protection, and dissatisfied with his rewards; if being either frightened by the terrors, or allured by the profits with which the State (that is the world) solicits her compliance, she gives herself up to be governed and ruled by it in things of religion; if in consequence of the *protection* and *emoluments* which it offers, she suffers *the State* to make articles of faith for her, and to prescribe forms of worship, and terms of communion, *different* from those which *Christ* has ordained, what can it be called but an open violation of her allegiance to her sovereign, and an elopement from her faithful husband; and having basely forsaken him for the pomps and vanities of this world (which are the sworn enemies of *Christ*) she stands chargeable with what the scripture calls spiritual fornication, and as such must expect to feel the consequences of his severe displeasure.

But—when it shall please Almighty God of his infinite mercy, to pour down his holy spirit upon
upon

upon both princes and people—a spirit of wisdom to discern the true nature and design of the Christian dispensation—a spirit of fortitude and integrity to avow openly their belief—a spirit of unfeigned zeal for the honour of that blessed Saviour, who left Heaven with all its glories that he might dignify and exalt us—Christianity will then be stript of the tawdry and vain ornaments in which it is now dressed, and be held forth in its native beauty, to the love, the veneration, and joy of the whole earth. *Amen! Even so come, Lord Jesus!*



*Of some of the OFFICES of DEVOTION
in the LITURGY and COMMON-
PRAYER.*

IT is unnecessary to inform you, Sir, that when the *Reformation* took place, under *Henry VIII.* *Edward VI.* and *Queen Elizabeth*, the generality of the people, both *Clergy* and *Laity*, were blind and bigotted *Papists*. The *reformers*, therefore, wisely attending to the advice of their Lord, *not to sew a new piece upon an old garment, lest the rent be made worse*, *Mat. ix. 16.* drew up the *present Liturgy* as much upon the plan, and in conformity to the *old*, as the intended reformation would possibly admit: retaining many things, in condescension to the prejudices of the times, which in their hearts they disapproved, and hoped afterwards to remove: but, how fruitless all attempts to rectify the imperfections they were then forced to retain! how vain and ineffectual all the humble supplications, the remonstrances, the magnanimous sufferings, the free and candid disquisitions, &c. of some of the worthiest and best members, and clergy of the Church have hitherto been; the experience of near two hundred Years, and especially some late transactions, too evidently shew,

The

The design of what follows, is not to point out the several deficiencies; improprieties; redundancies; repetitions; intermingling of offices; injudicious choice and abrupt beginnings of some of the Lessons from the Gospels and Epistles; the using two translations of the Psalms, in many places so different from, in some so seemingly contradictory to each other—all which many pious and learned clergymen of the Church have lately done, in *the free and candid disquisitions*.

You will permit me with becoming deference, yet with the liberty of those whom JESUS CHRIST *bath made free*, to represent, as a ground also of our *dissent* from the Church, several things in the offices of *Confirmation*; of *Baptism*; of the *Communion*; of the *Prayer* for the Parliament; of the *Visitation* of the Sick; and of the *Ordination* of Priests and Deacons—which we think to be liable to great objections; to be reproachful to *Christianity*; to be injurious to the interest of real piety and virtue; apt to cherish fallacious hopes; and to give men wrong notions of the terms of acceptance with God, and of the nature of *true religion*.

And first; of CONFIRMATION—which is now generally allowed to be *no institution* of JESUS CHRIST or *his Apostles*, but an *invention* of after-ages: never heard of in the Church, as now used, till the times of *Tertullian*, and then performed by *Presbyters*, as well as *Bishops*, and immediately after Baptism *: at which time also, a variety of other whimsical superstitions were brought into the Church, such as anointing the baptised with oil, giving them milk and honey, &c. † And here, I shall

* Vide Lord King's Enquiry, part II. page 91.

† That *Acts* VIII. 14, affords not the least ground for the rite of *confirmation*, as now used, is plain; because *Peter* and *John's*

shall not insist upon a manifest inconsistency betwixt *Art. xxv.* and *the office*; the *article* affirming *confirmation* to be not a sacrament, because it hath *no visible sign* or *ceremony* ordained of God: but, *the office* directing the Bishop to *lay his hand* upon the confirmed to certify them *by this sign* of God's favour — for this is of small weight, in comparison with the pernicious tendency of *this Rite* to cherish in mens minds a false and dangerous peace; to give them wrong notions of the

John's going down to *Samaria*, and laying hands on the new converts, was to give them the *miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost*, such as *Praying, Propheying, Tongues, &c.* to form them into a Church, and to fit them for the offices of public and solemn worship: which no Bishop at present will pretend to do. These gifts were something *visible*; for it is said when *Simon Magus* saw, &c. &c. Besides, as *Dr. Whitby* observes, if the Apostles laid not their hands on *all that were baptised*, it makes nothing for the present rite of *confirmation*: if they did, then *Simon Magus* also was *confirmed*; which no one will presume to say.

And when it is said, *Acts xv. 32.* that *Judas and Silas* exhorted the brethren (at *Antioch*) and *confirmed* them; it has not the least reference to the rite, as now used; for these brethren at *Antioch* had been converted, and baptised, and formed into a large and flourishing Church, many years before: but having been lately *troubled and subverted*, unsettled, in their Minds (v. 24.) by some *judaizing* christians, about eating blood, and things strangled, and the obligation of the *Mosaic law*; the Apostles at *Jerusalem* having, upon an appeal, decreed their release from that law, sent *Judas and Silas* to acquaint them with this decree; which when the Church at *Antioch* in a full assembly had received, they *rejoiced for the consolation*, (v. 31.) And these messengers *being Prophets* (i. e. preachers) took the occasion of their being thus assembled to *exhort them with many words*, i. e. to discourse to them largely on the subject of their message, and to *confirm*, or compose their before doubting and unsettled minds; and to establish them in that liberty with which Christ had made them free.

See this point farther considered in *Dissenting Gent's. Letters*, 12mo. edit. page 44 and 168.

terms

terms of obtaining *acceptance with God*, and the gift of *his spirit*; and thus to lull them into a deep and delusive *security* as to the state of their souls, when totally unacquainted with the vital transforming influence of *real religion*.

For upon what ground, or with what confidence, can the Bishop take upon him, with solemnity to declare to the multitude, all strangers before him, even in an address to *Almighty God*—
 “ *That he hath vouchsafed to REGENERATE these*
 “ *his servants, by water* (and not by water only)
 “ *but also by the HOLY GHOST; and to have given*
 “ *them the FORGIVENESS OF ALL THEIR SINS*—and
 “ *then to lay his hand upon each of their heads, to*
 “ *certifie, or assure, every individual person, by*
 “ *THAT SIGN, of GOD’s favour and gracious good-*
 “ *ness towards them.*”

You will be pleased to remember all that is required as necessary to the reception of this inestimable benefit, is, “ that they can say the Creed, the Lord’s-prayer, the ten Commandments, the short catechism, and declare that they renew the solemn promise made for them at baptism.” Are these a *proper ground*, on which the Bishop can proceed to build so immense a fabric, as the *assurance* of peace with God, and of the regenerating and sanctifying influence of *his spirit*? Or, is it not an house built upon the sand?

Delusive fallacious hopes are one of the *fatal rocks* upon which thousands of immortal souls are generally shipwrecked and lost. This Bishop, by the multitude who flock to be confirmed, is considered as the representative and the ambassador of JESUS CHRIST, as one who hath himself *received the HOLY GHOST*, and is able to give it to others;
 and

and who hath *authority* committed to him, in the name of the SACRED TRINITY, to *forgive the sins of men*: who hath taken the charge of their souls, as one who must, at his peril, give an account to the *great shepherd*, who will shortly appear.—They therefore, confidently presume that he would not speak to them, a *false peace*; nor *deceive* them in an affair, in which their *everlasting salvation* is concerned.—Having, then, with such solemnity, in the presence and name of God, *assured* every one of them (each individual person) by a *sacred sign*, that *his peace* is made with God; that *his sins are all forgiven*; that he is *born again of the Holy Ghost*; and is therefore undoubtedly fit for heaven—no wonder they all *depart in peace*, exulting in their happy state. But, how often before the day is finished, by the riot and disorder with which they return home; or by the little seriousness or sobriety of their after conduct in life, doth it too plainly appear, that these *assurances* of the Bishop were all groundless and deceptive; that he *spoke peace* to those, to whom *no peace* belonged; that he lulled them into a deep and dangerous security: and so unhappily became the *minister of sin*.

There is an awful day coming, in which the *supreme BISHOP* will hold a visitation of his Churches; and then their Lordships, disrobed of all present distinctions, and cast down from their thrones, must stand upon a level with the meanest of their people; and give an account to HIM who hath *purchased them with his own blood*, of the many *ten thousand* souls, over whom they have professed to *watch*; and with whose safe conduct to everlasting happiness they have *charged themselves*, before God and their country. But—if it shall then be found, that by these *solemn assurances*

thousands of immortal souls, for whom CHRIST died, were rather *confirmed* in that supineness and dangerous insensibility, which is too natural to the mind of man, than *roused* to a serious care to break off their sins, and to become uniformly and truly good—how great will be the unhappiness of being found to have at all contributed to so disastrous an event!

The office of BAPTISING INFANTS is, we think, also liable to insuperable objections. The unspeakable absurdity of accepting *strangers* to stand forth as *sponsors* for the religious education of the child, and of rejecting absolutely *the parents*, under whom it is to grow up—has before been observed. (See page 10.) Alike strange and absurd; and contrary to all scripture and reason and common sense; are *the questions* put to the poor infant, and *the answers* it is supposed to give—*Dost thou believe in God—Dost thou renounce the Devil—Wilt thou be baptised—Wilt thou keep obediently*—Is not this most manifestly to pervert, to overturn, to destroy the very nature of this *sacred institution*; to give it the air of a solemn farce; and to expose it to the just scoffs and ridicule of unbelievers?

Religion, beyond all doubt, is, and can be, no other than a *personal* thing. *Christianity* knows nothing of believing, repenting and vowing *by proxy*; any more than of being *saved* or *damned* by proxy. The whole affair, as it stands manifestly in the *article* and *office* of the Church, is this: “The child is declared to be *born in original sin*, and in *the WRATH of God*; and *deserves to be DAM-NED* *.” God is *angry* with the infant, tho’ it hath done nothing to offend him, *angry even to*

* See Office of private Baptism and Art. ix.

WRATH; and it is in danger, under *this wrath*, of sinking into *everlasting damnation*. How then is it to be delivered from this dreadful situation? Why, without *repentance* and *faith* there is no remission of sins, nor reconciliation to God: but the child being unable to repent, and believe, and vow for itself; the parent procures two or three *sponsors* to repent and believe and vow *in its stead*: and so the child having thus vowed and believed *by proxy* before God, the eternal Majesty of Heaven lays by *his wrath*; his anger is appeased; the child's *sins are forgiven*, he is taken into the divine family, and is become an heir of eternal life! Is there nothing in all this, like a profanation of the name of God; like a shameful exposing the Religion of CHRIST to just scorn and contempt! How is it, that amidst so much knowledge and good sense, as confessedly shine in both the superior and inferior orders of this Church, so amazing an absurdity is suffered to remain!

Farther: there are some parts of our *Liturgy* which seem strongly to favour, if not expressly to acknowledge the absurd doctrine of TRANSUBSTANTIATION. For tho' article xxviii *, says, "that *transubstantiation* cannot be proved by holy writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of scripture:" Yet, what avails this, *the papist* will say; TRUTH will force its way, thro' seeming opposition: in your *Catechism*, the Church instructs her children to believe, "that *the body and blood of Christ* are VERILY and INDEED taken, and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." And the communicant is directed, just before receiving

* The article comes *seldom* under the notice of the common people; but the expressions in *the Liturgy* are continually before them.

the elements, to pray—"Grant us, gracious Lord,
 "so to *eat the Flesh* of thy dear son Jesus Christ,
 "and to *drink his blood*, that our *sinful bodies* may
 "be made clean by *his body*; and our souls wash-
 "ed thro' his most precious blood—and that we
 "may be made partakers of his most blessed *body*
 "*and blood*—"

Are not these expressions infinitely too strong for those who believe that there is nothing before them but *mere bread and wine*, which they are to eat and drink only *in remembrance* of our Lord's death? Do they not *naturally*, if not *necessarily*, convey the idea of *the body* of our Lord being *verily* and *really* present in that sacrament; and that by being taken *into our bodies*, it has some *efficacy*, some *power*, some secret, invisible, inexplicable *operation* to sanctify and cleanse *our bodies*, and to work some *happy effect* upon them? What else can be the meaning of these extraordinary words, at the delivering the elements — "The *body* of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve *thy body and soul* unto everlasting life—" The glorified *body* of Christ, all Protestants know to be now ascended into Heaven, and at the Father's right hand; and that *there* it is to remain till his descent at the last day *. It is by *his spirit* only that he is carrying on the great affairs of our sanctification and salvation. With what propriety, then, or what sense, can any who thus think, address the communicant in these words—*The body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body*—Does it not most evidently suggest the idea, that *the body* of our blessed Saviour is *verily* and *indeed* received into *our bodies*; and that it has some unknown, mysterious influence to guard *our*

* Acts iii. 21.

bodies from the evils of the present life, and to prepare them for an entrance into everlasting happiness in the other.

This evidently appears to us to be the *natural* and *most obvious* construction of the words; and to have a dangerous and strong tendency to prepare the mind to receive, with little reluctance, the gross absurdity of *transubstantiation*. Accordingly, these, and other parts of our liturgy, were so little disagreeable to the *Church of Rome*, that the *Pope* (as *Heylin* and *Camden* say) seemed willing to confirm it by his *papal* authority; and that it was offered in his name, if the *Queen* (*Elizabeth*) would acknowledge *the primacy* of that *see* *.

In the *prayer for the parliament* there is an expression which often has been, and often may be exceedingly offensive to every devout mind—

Compliments of *adulation*, to fellow-mortals, who are but dust, are infinitely unbecoming in an address to the *omniscient*, and *all perfect* MAJESTY of *Heaven*. But here, the Church commands all its Bishops and Clergy to pronounce and declare, before God and the people; the prince upon the throne, to be *a most religious King*.

The extreme impropriety of inserting *such compliments* in established forms of worship appears, from the *tremendous necessity* under which the clergy are laid to use them, whatever be the real character of *the king* that then reigns; whence it may happen, as it really has happened, that the Priest shall be seen addressing the *God of Truth*, with *lie in his mouth*; and pronouncing a King *most religious*, whom God knows, and himself knows, and the whole world around him knows, to be

* Bennet's Memorial, p. 89.

most wicked, debauched, profane and *irreligious* Men.

It was in the reign of *Charles* the second that this extremely improper compliment was inserted in our liturgy, and enjoined upon all its clergy. But—what a violation of all decency; what an insult upon the conscience and common sense of mankind! to be forced, not only in the presence of *Almighty* God, but in a solemn address to him, to acknowledge and declare THAT *most* profligate and wicked *prince* to be indeed a *most religious King*! What heart-felt anguish! what agonies of soul, must *Burnet*, *Tillotson*, *Patrick*, *Sharpe*, and indeed all the really virtuous and good clergy of the land undoubtedly suffer, to be forced before God, and their congregations, to *belie* their own sentiments; to *prostitute* their sacred character; to *offer incense* to an odious idol; to *justify the ungodly*; and to present to the all-knowing DEITY their *king* as *most religious*, whom at the same time they knew to be one of the most corrupt, immoral, *irreligious* men, that ever disgraced the English name!

Must not *Charles*, with his laughing courtiers, look with sovereign contempt upon Priests and all their functions; and enjoy highly the solemn farce? Is it strange, that *scepticism* and *infidelity* spread their malignant influence, and prevailed greatly in *that* reign! rather, is it not strange, that the whole nation had not turned *deists*; and conceived an *utter abhorrence* of all offices of public worship; when they saw them shamefully prostituted to court flattery and sordid interest; and that faith, and truth, and honour were fled from all the most revered and sacred characters in the land! Nor would it destroy the force of this

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objection, even if the prince for the time being, were possessed of all the virtues without any of the vices of his predecessors — for his life is as uncertain—as those of his meanest subjects — and who can tell what shall be after him under the sun?

The prince who *most deserves* this flattering appellation will always *least desire* it; will be most ready to give it up; will wish to have it changed for one more suitable to the imperfections of mortality—For what man, what prince upon earth, when he presents himself as a supplicant before the *Almighty SOVEREIGN*, must not come, like the humble penitent in the parable, with—*God be merciful to me a sinner?*

The offices of *Ordination* and *Visitation of the Sick* appear to us, likewise, loaded with insuperable difficulties; containing matters of just offence to every serious and sober mind; reproachful to *christianity*; extremely apt to ensnare the conscience, and to send the priest out into the world, and the *sick man* out of it, under a dangerous delusion.

Of every young candidate, who comes to him for orders, the Bishop, as in the presence, and as the ambassador of *JESUS CHRIST*, demands—*“Do you trust, that you are INWARDLY MOVED by the HOLY GHOST to take upon you this office?”* To which he replies *“I trust that I am SO-MOVED.”* Upon which the Bishop proceeds to invest him with this office, in this extraordinary form of words—*“RECEIVE the HOLY GHOST for the office of a priest—whose SINS THOU FORGIVEST THEY ARE FORGIVEN; WHOSE SINS THOU RETAINEST THEY ARE RETAINED; IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY GHOST. Amen.”* The

young priest, sent out into the world with this *transcendent* commission, is called to visit a sick or dying person of his cure: After some pious exhortations he is directed to examine;—" *Whether he believes the articles of the apostles creed; and truly repent him of his sins; and be in charity with all the world; and to move him to make a special confession, if his conscience is troubled with any weighty matter.*" After which, the priest is directed to *absolve* him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) in this most solemn manner—

" *Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: and by the AUTHORITY committed to me, I ABSOLVE thee from ALL THY SINS; in the Name of the FATHER, of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST, Amen.*"

Upon the *three* several parts of this important transaction I beg leave to make the *three* following remarks.

First. As to the question—" *Do you trust that you are INWARDLY moved by the HOLY GHOST?*" Who that considers, how many rich livings are in the gift of families, whose sons or dependents are educated for the Church, entirely with a view of its being, in future life, a genteel provision for them: and what force the high dignities and emoluments, attending this path of life, must naturally have to move a young mind to chuse this occupation—can, with the utmost stretch of charity, conceive *this* to be a proper question, to be put to the young student, just emerging from the gaiety of an university education? Must it not involve in extreme difficulties *both* parties concerned in this solemn transaction? "Certainly,

“ says Bp. Burnet, this answer—*I trust I am so*
 “ MOVED—ought well to be considered, by him
 “ that *expects*, as well as by him that *gives* it; for
 “ if any say—*I trust so*, who yet know nothing
 “ of any *such motion*, and can give no account of
 “ it, *he lies to the HOLY GHOST*; and makes his
 “ first approach to the altar, with a *lie in his*
 “ *mouth*; and that not to *men* but to GOD. If
 “ *the motives* which cause him to desire this office
 “ be not truly *religious and spiritual*, by venturing
 “ to give *this answer*, he is a sacrilegious pro-
 “ faner of the *Name of God*, and of *his HOLY*
 “ SPIRIT; he breaks in upon the Church, not to
 “ *feed*, but to *rob* it. And it is certain that he
 “ that begins *with a lie*, may be sent by the *fa-*
 “ *ther of lies*. Pastor. Care, page 96—98.”

There is something very awful in these sugges-
 tions of the good Bishop: but, did his lordship
 himself, and his brethren of that order, keep quite
 clear from the offence he here so justly condemns?
 Is there nothing like *lying to the HOLY GHOST* in
the part he is called to act in this very serious
 affair? For,

Secondly: When the Bishop, laying his hand
 upon the student's head, says —“RECEIVE THE
 “ HOLY GHOST, for the office of a priest—whose
 “ *sins thou forgiveest they are forgiven; whose sins*
 “ *thou retainest, they are retained; in the name of*
 “ *the Father, Son and Holy Ghost*. Amen — Doth
 he really know that he hath power from GOD to
 give the priest the HOLY GHOST; and that he hath
authority from the SACRED TRINITY to invest him
 with this transcendent power of *forgiving or re-*
*tain*ing sins? If he does *not know* that he *hath*;
 much more, if he is *conscious* that he *hath not this*
power; how tremendous a trifling is it in mat-
 ters

ters of the most awful moment ! how justly must his lordship fall also under the above censure of Bp. Burnet ! what a profanation must it be of the Name of the *eternal* God, who will not *bold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain !*

There is, in the office of *Ordination*, a very solemn *admonition*, which the Bishop gives to the priest, whom he is sending forth into the Church, in which he is HIMSELF also equally concerned —

“ They are sheep of *Christ*, which he hath bought
 “ by his death, and for whom he hath shed his
 “ blood : and if it shall happen that any member
 “ of this Church do take any hurt or hindrance
 “ (do cherish any false peace) thro’ your negli-
 “ gence, you know the greatness of the fault, and
 “ also the *horrible punishment* which will ensue.”

The exceeding *strangeness* of our adopting this *authoritative form* of ordaining priests, from the Church of *Rome*, and retaining it so long, will rise even to *astonishment*—when it is considered, that not till the *tenth* or *eleventh* century ; when it was sunk into the deepest dregs of ignorance and superstition ; did the Church of *Rome* itself presume to send forth its priests in this *authoritative form*—“ *Receive the Holy Ghost—whose sins thou forgiveest,*” &c. Amidst all its wantonness and pride, from the *fifth* to the *tenth* century, it had too much modesty to assume so *divine* a prerogative : But behold ! this plant, which sprung up from the most foul and polluted state which the *papacy* ever saw, is transplanted into this enlightened, this noble part of the vineyard of *Jesus Christ* ; and here suffered to grow ; to the reproach of the *christian* name ; to the wounding many a tender conscience ; to the insult of unbelievers ; and to the sinking the *sacerdotal* character,

by grasping at this enormous power, into great scorn and neglect.

This, doubtless, was what made good Bp. *Burnet* say, "that the *Ember weeks* were the burden
 " and grief of his life; because the things that he
 " was then called to see and to perform, with re-
 " gard to the candidates who came to be ordain-
 " ed, did often *tear his heart and pierce his soul*,
 " and made him cry out—*O that I had the wings*
 " *of a dove!*" Past. Care, pref. to 3d edit.

Dr. *Stebbing*, in his *Instructions of a parish mini-
 ster*, part II. owns, "that the doctrine of *sacerdotal*
 " *absolution* hath no foundation *in scripture*: that
 " some of the methods of restoring penitents in
 " the primitive Church have very much of the
 " *air of a farce*: that for the first *thousand years*
 " the *terms of absolution* ran all in the form of a
 " prayer, and not in the form of a peremptory
 " sentence, as it now stands in the *popish* forms,
 " and *from them* in our own: that the two forms,
 " (viz. in the *Ordination* and *Visitation* of the
 " Sick) are *novelties* alike; and it is very much
 " to be wished that they were both altered. He
 " freely blames those who grasp at the shadow of
 " an authority, which in truth and substance we
 " must all renounce. What else do we do, when
 " we pretend to absolve *conscience*? We may
 " make an hundred distinctions, and say the abso-
 " lution is not *authoritative* but *declarative*; not
 " *judicial* but *ministerial*; but if you would speak
 " to be understood, you must say, that with respect
 " to any real internal effect, it is *nothing*; and you
 " will speak truth too. For all the rest, if you
 " will preserve to God his prerogative *to forgive*
 " *sin*, are words without meaning." Vide page 37,
 38, 39, 51, 52,

Thirdly.

Thirdly. The last remark I shall make is upon the priest's executing this important trust, when called to visit a sick or dying parishioner—Upon his declaring his belief and repentance, as above recited, how wicked, profane, or profligate soever his whole former life has been, the priest is ordered to quiet his conscience from all painful apprehensions; to give him a plenary pardon of all his offences; and to say — *By the AUTHORITY committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: Amen* *. How *easy* a passport to Heaven—if *safe*: But, if *not safe*; if it be all a *solemn farce*; if it be deluding an *immortal soul* with fallacious and vain hopes; and putting a

* One remarkable instance, amongst many, may set the pernicious nature of this *sacerdotal absolution* in its odious and proper light. When *Charles II.* came to the close of his profligate life, three Bishops attended him: who, severally, by very free and serious admonitions, endeavoured to alarm his conscience; and to rouse him to some sober and penitential reflections: the king gave them the hearing, but answered not a word. He was six or seven times pressed to receive the Sacrament; and a table, with the elements, were brought into the room; but the king refused. Bp. *Ken* then asked him, *if he desired ABSOLUTION OF HIS SINS*, Which the king not declining—Behold! in this unimpressed, impenitent state of mind, the Bishop pronounced it over him: And in the name of the *sacred Trinity*, and as by authority from Almighty God—*gave him the full forgiveness of ALL HIS SINS*.

“As the king expressed no sense or sorrow for his past life, nor any purpose of amendment, this, says Bp. *Burnet*, was thought to be a prostitution of the peace of the Church: to give it to one who, after a life led as the king's had been, seemed to harden himself against every thing that could be said to him—and soon after died recommending his mistress and illegitimate children to the care of his brother, but said not a word of his queen, nor of his people, nor of his servants, nor of the payments of his debts, nor a word of religion.” Bp. *Burnet's* Hist. of his own Times, 8vo edit. vol. ii. p. 312.

dangerous cheat upon it in a matter wherein its everlasting interest is concerned — who may not justly termble to have any share in it? — How amazing that such an office is suffered to stand in this reformed Church — but how infinitely deplorable, that every clergyman in it “ must solemnly declare, and subscribe with his hand, his *unfeigned assent and consent* to this office, and that of *Ordination*, and to *all* and *every thing* contained in “ and prescribed by the book of Common Prayer!” — When will the disgraceful yoke be broken from their necks! and a spirit of just indignation rise against every encroachment on the rights of conscience; every profanation of the Name of God; every notorious corruption and prostitution of the *christian* faith to secular and sordid ends? Will God never arise to judgment, the God of *righteousness* and *truth*? Undoubtedly he will: and plead the cause of oppressed virtue, and rescue his *holy Name*, and the *divine religion* of his Son, from that scandal and contempt which the avarice and ambition, the superstition and folly of its professors have brought upon it. And then blessed will those be found, who amidst worldly suffering and reproach, have maintained the primitive simplicity and purity of the *gospel*; and *stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free*.

In the mean time; let no clergymen, of the high stamp, evermore reproach the *separatists* and *sectaries* (as they affect to call us) as *enthusiasts* and *fanaticks*. For what sect amongst all who dissent from the Church of *England* (*Papists* only excepted) carry their pretensions to *spiritual motions* and *communications* to so extravagant an height, as the Church itself does! Doth the *Quaker* or the *Methodist*

dist talk of being *moved by the Spirit*, and of praying and preaching under the *influence of the Spirit*: and doth not every clergyman of the Church most solemnly declare that he also feels the *motions of the Spirit*: that he perceives some internal sensations, some impressions on his mind, by which he believes himself *moved inwardly by the HOLY GHOST* to desire the office of a preacher? In consequence of this *internal motion and feeling of the Spirit*; doth not the Bishop, by an *external sign*, proceed actually to confer upon him a greater *measure of the HOLY GHOST* to qualify him for that work? And, again, in consequence of this, does he not go forth armed with a power, invested with a dignity, which render him, in reality, vastly superior to any prince upon earth; even with the *divine* and important power of FORGIVING OR RETAINING SINS? Have any *enthusiasts* amongst us ever pretended to such powers? Where was any *Dissenter*, *Methodist* or *Quaker*, ever charged with the *fanaticism* of assuming a power of *giving the HOLY GHOST*, or of pretending to an authority to *forgive or retain sins*?

I shall make no farther remarks upon several other vain and trifling *superstitions* which have been adopted from the Church of *Rome*; and admitted into this reformed, this protestant Church—such as bowing at the Name of Jesus—consecrating Churches—worshipping they know not *what*, and know not *why*, toward *the EAST*—the Cross in Baptism—the reading in assemblies of christian worship, to the exclusion of several useful parts of *holy scripture*, the spurious, ridiculous, romantic stories of *Bel and the Dragon*—*Susanna*—the *amorous*

vous Devil, who for love of a fair damsel slew seven unhappy husbands, who fell victims to his jealousy, on the *nuptial* night; but was smoaked away by the magic fumes of good *Tobias's* fishes liver.—

But—here I rest the grounds and merits of our **DISSENT**. Having proved, I trust, beyond doubt, that in *no one thing* we are *dissenters* from the *Church of England*, but only in *those things*, wherein she herself is, and knows herself to be, A **DISSENTER from the CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST**.

Were the reasons of our dissent much fewer and weaker than they are, they would still be sufficient to justify it. We can be under no obligation from human authority, to any religious compliance, whether of greater or less importance, which in our consciences and judgments we do not approve—The supposition that we are thus obliged is contrary to reason and scripture, and to the allegiance we owe to Christ. It is our duty to adhere to Him, as our only law-giver and king—and to profess and practise his religion in its genuine simplicity and original purity, free from the traditions and commandments of men. In so doing we can smile at those who upbraid us with the odious name of Schismatic, knowing that they only are chargeable with schism, who bring in and impose—such innovations and injunctions of men, as terms of Christ's communion—not those who reject and protest against them—and who separate from the Church, only in those things in which she separates from Christ.

Terms of communion, which Christ hath not made, though relating only to things of little consequence

sequence and in themselves indifferent, if by human authority we are prevented from partaking of the ordinances of the gospel without submitting to them, warrant and demand our protest against the power enjoining them, out of fidelity to Christ, and regard to his authority, which alone can fix the terms either of christian communion or of eternal salvation—And as we think human authority cannot oblige us to a compliance with the imposition of any unnecessary things in matters of religion, much less can we think it entitled to our regard, when it establishes and enjoins things so contrary to reason and to the gospel, and of such dangerous and destructive tendency to true religion and virtue, as are many of those particulars which I have laid before you.

If the *religion* of CHRIST be indeed a *revelation* sent down to us from God; and committed as a *sacred trust* to every one who believes, and hopes to be saved by it, *laity* as well as *clergy*, with a solemn charge that he *keeps it pure and uncorrupt*—Let him seriously consider; that this great Prophet and Lawgiver and King of the Church, will surely come down again, in glory and great power, to summon us all before him, and to render to every man according to his present works: and then—blessed will they be found who have held fast their integrity amidst surrounding temptations, who have declined any worldly honours, or sustained any worldly suffering, or loss, or reproach, out of conscience towards God, and for the preservation of the truth and purity of his religion. They are the words of *eternal TRUTH*, and of *HIM* who will judge the world—*Whoso shall confess me before*

before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in Heaven, and before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men, and is ashamed of me and of my words (my pure and uncorrupt religion) in this adulterous generation; of him will I be ashamed; him will I deny before my Father who is in Heaven, and before the angels of God. Luke xii. 8. Matt. x. 32.

The present scene will soon be closed: an important and everlasting one will quickly succeed. *There every man will rise into dignity and glory, or sink into shame and everlasting reproach, according to the integrity and virtue of his present conduct. Be thou faithful unto the death; and I will give thee a crown of life, Rev. ii. 10.* It is the wise appointment of Heaven, that TRUTH and RIGHT, genuine uncorrupt Religion, should now generally labour under some worldly discouragements; whilst *Error* and *Superstition* enjoy the countenance and support of the powers of this world: to try the patience, the faith and the integrity of men: that *they who are approved*, men of probity and real virtue, *may be thus shewn and made manifest.* But to those, who by a patient continuance in well doing, by an unshaken adherence to TRUTH and RIGHT, amidst all temporal discouragements, *seek the glory and honour of approving themselves to God, and discharging faithfully their duty, to them will be given stations of exalted dignity in the kingdom of the Messiah; and they shall receive that perfection of all the glory, and all the happiness, of which the human soul is capable, called ETERNAL LIFE.*

There let my lot and my portion be given me, will every real christian say: I am content, if
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it be the will of Heaven, to follow the great leader and *captain of my salvation through suffering in this world*; in the assured hope of thereby rising with him into so much the greater glory and felicity in the other.

APPEN.

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A P P E N D I X.

AS the Restoration of *Charles II.* and the *Act of Uniformity* consequent upon it, are important parts of the *English* history not, in general, rightly understood—As the character and state of the *Dissenters* in this kingdom were deeply interested in, and greatly affected by it—As that *unrighteous act*, which silenced, and cast out, *two thousand* of our brave and virtuous clergy, is the basis and foundation on which the *Church of England* at present stands, and contains the grounds of our separation from it; we beg leave to represent to the impartial public some *extraordinary circumstances* attending that event; which shew the baseness, ingratitude and iniquity of those transactions, and which deserve to be transmitted as a proper warning and instruction to indignant posterity.

To this purpose we observe in the *FIRST* place, That the *Puritan* or *Presbyterian* clergy were the only body of men, in the whole kingdom, who had the courage to oppose, and to protest openly against the trial and condemnation of *Charles I.*; that, with great danger to themselves, they presented a bold remonstrance to the general and council of war, the *then ruling powers*; warning them

them, in the name of God, and conjuring them in the most solemn manner, to desist from their violent proceedings against the king. This long and spirited *protest* was signed by above fifty of the principal Presbyterian ministers in and about London, and presented Jan. 18, 1648-9*. “The Presbyterians, and body of the city (says Bp. Burnet) were much against it, and were every where fasting and praying for the king’s preservation †.” Archdeacon *Echard* says, “*Cromwell* first pulled down the *Presbyterians*, and then destroyed the king —and that almost all the *Presbyterian* ministers in London, and very many in the several counties, and a few of the *Independants* themselves, declared against the design in their sermons, in conferences, in monitory letters, petitions, protestations, and public remonstrances: they earnestly begged, that, contrary to so many *oaths* and *imprecations*, contrary to public and private faith, &c. they would not defile their own hands and the kingdom with royal blood ‡.” Abundant proof of the same might be brought from *Clarendon*, *Rapin*, &c. but the age is too much enlightened now to need it. We proceed therefore to observe,

SECONDLY, That the *Presbyterians* had the principal hand, and were the chief agents, in restoring king *Charles II.* to the throne. This appears beyond doubt from the united suffrage of the historians of those times.

When *Charles II.* came to Scotland, Lord *Clarendon* says, expecting force from that kingdom to restore him “to his father’s throne, and the par-

* See the whole Protest, Neal’s Hist. Purit. vol. iii. p. 532.

† Hist. of his Times, vol. ii. p. 31.

‡ Echard’s Hist. of Eng. p. 654. 708.

“liament of *England* resolved to send an army
 “against him, *all the Presbyterian party* greatly
 “opposed it—they were bold in contradicting
 “*Cromwell* in the house, and crossing all his de-
 “signs in the city *.”

The first solemn conference which was had with
 general *Monk*, to induce him to restore the king,
 was “at *Northumberland* house with the earl of
 “that name, the Earl of *Manchester*, *Hollis*, Sir
 “*William Waller*, *Lewis*, and other eminent
 “persons, who were looked upon as the heads
 “and governors of the moderate *presbyterian*
 “party—In this conference the king’s restoration
 “was proposed in direct terms, as absolutely ne-
 “cessary — the *London (Presbyterian)* ministers
 “talked loudly” in the same strain “without ex-
 “posing themselves to the danger of naming the
 “king; which yet they did not long forbear;
 “every body understood they thought it neces-
 “sary the people should return to their allegi-
 “ance †.”

“*Monk*, says *Rapin* †, knowing how the *Pres-*
 “*byterians* stood affected, employed, probably,
 “*Clarges* his confident, to make a secret agree-
 “ment with some of their chiefs for the restoring
 “of the king, *Charles II.* by their means.”—
Monk comes with his army to *London*, and having
 restored the secluded members to their seats in the
 house, thereby made it properly a *Presbyterian*
 parliament: “it continued sitting but 25 days:
 “in which time several steps were made which
 “clearly discovered that they were by no means
 “disinclined to the king. For 1. They ordered

* *Hist. Rebel.* vol. vi. p. 374, 475.

† *Ibid*, vol. vi. p. 733, 734.

‡ *Rapin's Hist. Eng.* vol. xiii. p. 199, 200.

“ a general discharge of all the imprisoned friends
 “ of the king. 2. They repealed the oath for
 “ the abjuration of *Charles Stuart*, and all the
 “ royal family. 3. They voted *Monk* to be
 “ general of the armies of the three nations.
 “ 4. They voted down the old, and appointed a
 “ new council of state. 5. They made great
 “ changes in the *militia*; and took away all com-
 “ missions from the republicans. 6. They abro-
 “ gated the oath requiring to be faithful to the
 “ established government, without a king and
 “ house of peers. Lastly; They dissolved them-
 “ selves, issuing out writs for a new parliament to
 “ meet 25th of April.—In this free parliament—
 “ the *Presbyterians*, who were *much superior* in
 “ number, did not think proper to exclude the
 “ *Royalists*, with whom they were in perfect agree-
 “ ment for restoring the king—This parliament
 “ was an assembly, in which the *Presbyterians* had
 “ certainly a superiority of voices: consequently,
 “ a *Presbyterian parliament* restored the king to
 “ the throne of his ancestors*.”

Bishop *Burnet* says, “ these five following per-
 “ sons, all *Presbyterians*, had the chief hand in
 “ the *Restoration*; Sir *Ant. Ashley Cooper*, after-
 “ wards Earl of *Shaftesbury*; Sir *Arthur Annesley*
 “ afterwards Earl of *Anglesey*; *Denzil Hollis*,
 “ created Lord *Hollis*; the Earl of *Manchester*;
 “ and Lord *Roberts* †.”

“ The *Presbyterians* and the *Royalists*, (says
 “ *Hume*) being united, formed the voice of the
 “ nation; which called for the king’s restoration.
 “ The kingdom was *almost entirely* in the hands of
 “ the former party (the *Presbyterians*): some zeal-
 “ lous leaders amongst them began to renew the

* *Rapin’s Hist. of Engl.* vol. xiii. p. 227, 241, 242.

† *Hitt. of his Times*, vol. ii. p. 242. marg. note.

“ demand

“ demand of conditions—but the general opinion
 “ seemed to condemn these jealous capitulations
 “ with their sovereign—The leaders of the *Presby-*
 “ *terians*, the Earl of *Manchester*, Lord *Fairfax*,
 “ Lord *Roberts*, *Hollis*, Sir *Ant. Ashley Cooper*,
 “ *Annesley*, *Lewis*, were determined to atone for
 “ past transgressions.” — Again, “ The king’s
 “ negligent ingratitude to the unfortunate *Ca-*
 “ *valiers*, admits of some excuse; as he had been
 “ restored *more* by the efforts of his reconciled
 “ enemies (the *Presbyterians*) than of his antient
 “ friends *.”

“ The *Presbyterians*, says another historian,
 “ were the *sole cause* of the Restoration. I do not
 “ say helpers towards it, but causers of it: and
 “ that it would not, could not, have been
 “ brought about by any other party.—Through
 “ the whole transaction there was scarce any one
 “ agent, who was not a *Presbyterian*, above the
 “ character of a letter carrier. General *Monk* was
 “ a *Presbyterian*, or rather an *Independant*; so were
 “ his two chaplains *Grumble* and *Price*; so were Sir
 “ *Ant. Ashley Cooper*, Mr. *Annesley*, Sir *William*
 “ *Morrice*, Lord *Fairfax*, *Hollis*, *Ingoldby*, *Har-*
 “ *ley*, Admirals *Montagu* and *Lawson*, *Gerrard*,
 “ *Lewis*, *Waller*, the Earls of *Northumberland*
 “ and *Manchester*—in a word, the council of state,
 “ which governed before the king came in, were
 “ all *Presbyterians*: it was impossible for men of
 “ any *other profession* to manage such a matter,
 “ without troops, without ships, without money,
 “ without a town or castle; all which were in the
 “ possession of the council of state, and their
 “ General *Monk* †.”

* Hume’s Hist. of Gr. Brit. vol. ii. p. 113. 158.

† Critic. Hist. of Engl. vol. ii. p. 307, 308.

THIRDLY, The *Presbyterians*, (whom the king, with too much truth, perhaps, used afterwards to call *God's silly people*) trusting to his declaration from *Breda*, solemnly promising *liberty to tender consciences*; and that no man should be disquieted for differences of opinion in matters of religion; which did not disturb the peace of the kingdom: and relying upon the fair speeches and assurances of his friends; and some of them, perhaps, duped by the low cunning of the king; who, a committee of their ministers being sent to him at *Breda*, ordered them to be in waiting whilst he, good prince, was withdrawn to perform his private devotions; in which his heart was so enlarged, that his voice was distinctly heard by the ministers in the anti-chamber, devoutly "*thanking God that he was a COVENANTED king*" (alluding to the solemn league and covenant, to which he had bound himself by the most sacred of oaths) "*and that he hoped that the Lord would give him an humble, meek and forgiving spirit.*" — However it was, either infatuated and deluded, by the fair promises of the king, and his treacherous friends; or pressed by the civil discord, and the total disorder into which they apprehended the nation was again running — the *Presbyterians*, trusting to his honour, without any conditions restored the king to the throne — and now, behold the gratitude, with which he requites them! For,

FOURTHLY, Two years had scarce elapsed, before, by all the artifices of court-management; by the influence and zeal of tyrannical and bigotted prelates; by lying and sham plots, and pretended conspiracies, the *Act of Uniformity* was by a small majority passed into a law: "by which two thousand

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“sland of our ministers” (the very men who had
 so successfully helped forward his restoration)
 “were cast out of their livings; and exposed,
 “with their distressed families to innumerable
 “sufferings. To speak any thing derogatory of
 “the *Common Prayer*, was punished, for the first
 “offence, with a whole year’s imprisonment, with-
 “out bail or mainprize; and the second offence,
 “with imprisonment for life: the meeting for
 “religious worship, in any separate assemblies,
 “was punishable with severe fines, with imprison-
 “ment, and banishment:” The gaols were soon
 filled with the *unhappy* RESTORERS of this *vaga-*
bond king: their houses were pillaged; their
 families reduced to beggary and want. An esti-
 mate was published of near *eight thousand* protes-
 tant *Dissenters* who perished in prison, in the suf-
 ferings on a religious account, in the reign of this
 ungrateful, perfidious Prince: and by severe
 penalties inflicted on them, for no other crime but
 assembling to worship God, they suffered in their
 trades and estates in the compass of a few years at
 least, it is said, two millions *.

This was the king who had himself *three* several
 times taken the *Scots Covenant*; declared solemnly
 his detestation of *Popery* and *Prelacy*; vowed
 never to tolerate them in any part of his domi-
 nions; and in the most solemn manner swore *by*
the eternal and almighty God, who liveth and reign-
eth for ever, that he would not only enjoin the
Covenant, but fully establish *Presbyterian* govern-
 ment, and their Directory for worship, and ob-
 serve them in his own practice and family, and
 never to oppose them, nor endeavour any change.

* Critic. Hist. of Engl. p. 411. and Neal’s Hist. Purit. vol.
 iv. p. 544.

“ By the *Act of Uniformity*, says Mr. *Locke* on
 “ this subject, all the clergy of *England* are ob-
 “ liged to subscribe and declare the *Corporation*
 “ *oath*, viz. *That it is not lawful, upon any pre-*
 “ *tence whatsoever, to take arms against the king.*”
 (A position most dangerous as well as false; abso-
 lutely subversive of our present happy constitution,
 and which themselves, in the succeeding reign,
 openly disavowed; and acted in direct opposition to
 it.) “ This they readily complied with: for you
 “ must know, that sort of men are taught rather to
 “ *obey than understand.* And yet, that *Bartholo-*
 “ *mew-day* was fatal to our Church and religion;
 “ by throwing out a very great number of worthy,
 “ learned, pious, and orthodox Divines, who
 “ could not come up to *this oath and other things*
 “ in that *act*. And so great was the zeal in carry-
 “ ing on this Church affair, and so blind the
 “ obedience required, that if you compute the
 “ time of passing *the act*, with that allowed for
 “ the clergy to subscribe the book of Common
 “ Prayer thereby established, you will find it
 “ could not be printed and distributed, so as that
 “ one man in forty could have seen and read the
 “ book they did so perfectly *assent and consent*
 “ to*.”

To conclude—The instruction we are to learn
 hence; is to say with Lord *Strafford*, (whose
 faithful and long services his sovereign † reward-
 ed, with, in effect, signing a death warrant to cut
 off his head) *Put not your trust in princes, nor in*
the sons of men, for in them there is no help! But
 —we thank God, there is a SON OF MAN whom
 HE hath constituted PRINCE over all the kings of

* Critic. Hist. of Engl. vol. ii. p. 350. Maiz. Collec. p. 61.
 † Charles I.

the earth, (Rev. i. 5.) in whose supremacy we triumph; in whom with firm confidence and security we trust: we glory in being *his subjects*; and rejoice in the assurance that his kingdom of *righteousness, of liberty and truth*, shall finally prevail: and that every loss we sustain, and every temporal emolument and advantage we forego, out of conscience towards God, and from allegiance to HIM, the *only king* in his Church, will be magnificently rewarded; in that glorious everlasting kingdom which, according to his promise, we know will shortly take place.

In the mean time, we are content, if the will of God be so, to be cast out and reproached, and to suffer great worldly discouragements, (which, in all ages, hath been the lot of some of the wisest and worthiest and best men upon earth) in the assured expectation that *there are times of refreshing coming from the presence **, or appearing, of *this great KING of the Church*; when every man will rise into glory and honour, or sink into shame and everlasting contempt, according to the fidelity, or negligence of his present conduct: and to all shall be recompensed *according to their present works*.

Amen! Even so come Lord Jesus!

* Acts iii. 19.

N.B. *The above account hath been given chiefly with a view to shew the great ingratitude and treachery of Charles the Second, and to set in its true light an historical fact, which seems to be forgotten in the reproaches occasionally thrown out against the Dissenters, as enemies to monarchical govern-*

government: for otherwise, it reflects no little disgrace upon the Presbyterians, that they were seduced by the King's promises, and that they did not improve the glorious opportunity which his Restoration afforded, of obtaining a real security both to religious and civil liberty.

THE END.



